DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 641 FL 001 514

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TITLE	An Explanation of "Levels" of Competence in Foreign Language Learning; German, Levels I, II, III.
INSTITUTION	Illinois State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield.
Spons Agency	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
Pub Date	Apr 69
Note	18p.
EDRS Price	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.00
Descriptors	Articulation (Program), Audiolingual Methods, Audiolingual Skills, College High School Cooperation, *Course Content, Course Objectives, Cultural Awareness, *German, Grammar, Language Instruction, *Language Learning Levels, Language Skills, Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, *Secondary Schools, *Second Language Learning, Speaking, Writing Skills

Abstract

This report of a two-day meeting at Bloomington, Illinois in April 1969 discusses the basic elements of each of the first three levels of foreign language learning. Desired student performance at the completion of levels 1, 2, and 3 of German is enumerated for listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and culture. Suggested basic grammatical items for levels 1 and 2 are specified and a list of conference participants is provided. (WB)

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GUIDELINES
FOR
THREE LEVELS OF COMPETENCE
IN
GERMAN

THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF ILLINOIS
RAY PAGE, SUPERINTENDENT

FL001 514

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TITLE III, NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT

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An Explanation of "Levels" of Competence in Foreign Language Learning

GERMAN

Levels I, II, III

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Based upon

the Deliberations and Recommendations

of Participants at the Bloomington Conference

April 1969

INTRODUCTION

The confusion which has resulted in Illinois from the lack of sound articulation in foreign language programs made obvious the need for more meaningful dialogue among foreign language teachers at all levels of learning. For this reason the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction sponsored a two-day meeting at Bloomington in April 1969, which was called "A Conference for the Improvement of Foreign Language Articulation."

This meeting attempted to resolve many questions that have been raised by Illinois teachers concerning the difference between a "level" of learning and a "year" of learning. The solution to this problem is of the utmost importance if well-articulated programs are to be developed. Classroom teachers agree that it is often unrealistic to expect students to master the skills of one "level" in one academic year because of the tremendous variations in materials used, teacher competency and methodology, class size, length of period, and student abilities. Foreign language supervisors in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction concur with the classroom teachers that only by defining language learning in terms of levels, which will remain constant regardless of the length of time required for a student to achieve proficiency, can sound articulation be achieved. The Bloomington Conference became an actuality because this Office wanted an explanation of levels which would reflect not only the opinions of State Foreign Language Supervisors but also the professional viewpoints of a statewide group of high school teachers and college professors. The representatives chosen to attend this meeting were a cross-section of teachers using many different texts, various kinds of electronic teaching aids, and methodologies from the most traditional to the most audio-lingual. All grades from junior high through beginning college, in both large and small schools from all geographical areas of Illinois were represented. (See Appendix for list of participants and their addresses.)

The task of these teachers was to discuss and agree upon what should be the basic elements in each "level" of learning. They stressed the fact that most students will need a three-year sequence in high school to complete the requirements for the first two levels. Classroom teachers must explain this to their students and also assume the responsibility of discussing this matter with administrators and counselors. Those responsible for student programs in the secondary schools should clearly understand that students who have not successfully completed two foreign language "levels" of learning will be severely handicapped in their first college course. (Students who complete only two "years" in high school will receive credit toward graduation, of course, but they should be warned that they will usually lack many of the necessary skills that are needed in Level III courses in college.)

EXPLANATION

In reading the explanation of "levels" on the pages which follow, it is important to remember these points:

1. The purpose of the Bloomington Conference was not to write a detailed curriculum guide for French, Spanish, and German. Participants were primarily interested in preparing a concise statement which would indicate the language skills and attitudes that should be expected of students at the first three levels.

2. It was generally agreed that the text being used is realistically the teacher's curriculum guide. Because some materials, however, are far more inclusive than others, participants felt that a list of essential grammar items should be included in the Appendix for each language discussed.

3. The question of preferable teaching methodologies was not a part of the discussion or recommendations of the Bloomington Conference. Participants did emphasize, however, that all foreign language instruction should follow through the basic skills -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- in order to culminate in speaking proficiency, cultural empathy, and literary appreciation.

4. It was emphasized at the conference that students should have a practical knowledge of all basic grammar by the end of Level II. Although grammar does play an intensive role in Level III, it should be taught in the form of review with expansion and refinement of basic concepts previously studied.

5. The conference decided that the work in Level III (primarily reading and review grammar) is, in most cases, of the same complexity as that required in the first year of college work for students who have completed two "levels" (usually three years) in high school. Secondary schools which have well-articulated sequential courses will undoubtedly offer the equivalent of Level III work to their advanced students.

6. Participants delegated to the Foreign Language Supervisors in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction the task of editing and distributing the recommendations of the conference to all schools in Illinois. Inasmuch as the basic premises which were formulated for each language, as well as the desired student performance at the completion of each level, were so similar, a composite from these ideas has been used for each level in French, German, and Spanish. A separate appendix is included for each language.

German - Level I

Basic Premises:

1. Development of oral comprehension and speaking skills are the major goals of instruction in Level I.
2. Introduction of grammatical concepts is an essential feature of Level I programs.
3. Instruction in the appreciation of the culture is an intregal part of the regular-class and extra-curricular activities.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level I

LISTENING: Comprehend the language spoken at normal classroom speed, within the range of vocabulary and constructions found in the more generally used Level I textbooks; this also includes recognition of cognates and the use of gestures.

SPEAKING: Reproduce meaningful utterances with reasonably correct pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, that demonstrate control of the whole sound system.

1. Form and answer questions relating to familiar subject matter.
2. Participate in a directed dialogue with acceptable accuracy and speed.
3. Relate facts about a familiar object or situation.
4. Attempt conversation, using language acceptable to a native, about previously studied topics.

READING:

1. Relate the sounds of the language to the printed word by reading that material which has previously been learned orally.
2. Comprehend, while reading silently without translation, the basic reading materials of the text.
3. Read aloud a familiar text.
4. Read additional material whose meaning can be derived through inference.

WRITING: Reproduce accurately, spelling and punctuating correctly, in limited, guided writing the spoken vocabulary in the following ways:

1. Write familiar sentences from dictation.
2. Formulate questions and answers about previously learned material.
3. Answer questions which would form narrative.
4. Supply the dialogue of one person in a conversation.
5. Write statements about a stimulus (i.e., a visual aid).
6. Rewrite a simple familiar narrative, making simple changes in tense.
7. Do written exercises that involve simple manipulation of number, gender, word order, tense, replacement, negation, interrogation, command, comparison, possession.

GRAMMAR: Although additional grammar may be introduced in order to preview work which will be studied in the succeeding levels, emphasis should be placed upon attaining usuable control of the basic grammatical principles. (See Appendix)

CULTURE: NOTE:
In the first years of study the acquisition of the basic linguistic skills is in itself an important cultural goal. It is essential to remember that language is the most complete expression of the culture of any people. In addition, the student must learn to identify the needs, desires, and aspirations that are common to all mankind while also becoming aware of how people are uniquely different.

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the cultural connotations of the language within his structural control, as well as of the accompanying gestures and expressions.
2. Show an awareness of the social conventions which regulate the what and how of communication in the foreign culture.
3. Have an initial acquaintance with the manners, foods, clothing, customs, and family life unique to the country being studied, as derived from the text, audio-visual aids, and outside readings in English.
4. Reflect attitudes which show a human understanding and respect for a society uniquely different, and yet similar, to his own.
5. Know some folklore as well as a few anecdotes and proverbs.
6. Demonstrate as a result of class discussions and club activities an introductory knowledge of the music, dance, art, geography, and history of the country.

German - Level II

Basic Premises:

1. Continued development of oral comprehension and accurate control of the sound system when speaking are major goals in Level II.
2. A practical knowledge of all basic grammar is essential by the end of Level II.
3. A firsthand knowledge of brief examples of cultural and of contemporary writing is an intregal part of the reading of Level II.
4. An awareness in written and oral work of the similarities and differences of each culture, and the continued development of empathy with the value systems of the foreign society are major goals in all Level II courses.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level II

LISTENING:

1. Relate sound to symbol, recognize phonetic items in speech, and easily understand the spoken alphabet when used in spelling activities.
2. Recognize the correct sounds and sound combinations of the language.
3. Recognize all of the basic syntactic patterns of speech.
4. Comprehend an educated native speaking at normal classroom speed on a topic concerning everyday situations in the contemporary culture of the country.

SPEAKING:

Develop an active vocabulary of approximately 1000 words and easily produce in oral speech the verb tenses and moods of the commonly used verbs.

1. Reproduce all sounds of the speech system in such a way as to be recognized by a native speaker and distinguish clearly those sounds where an error can distort meaning.
2. Use correctly all basic sentence patterns.
3. Initiate simple questions, and answer in complete sentences questions asked by other students, the teacher, or the text.
4. Participate in an impromptu dialogue using ten statements from material or topics previously studied and make appropriate rejoinders to the comments of others.
5. Retell an anecdote of approximately 100 words or describe an everyday activity of interest to the class.
6. Converse in simple terms about the cultural and contemporary reading selections studied during this level.
7. Sightread orally material containing familiar vocabulary.

Level II (Con't.)

READING:

1. Read materials of a difficulty equal to that found in most standard Level II texts. This material should contain all cases, tenses, moods, and voices.
2. Develop a passive reading vocabulary of approximately 1300-1800 words, deriving meanings from context without using the dictionary until all other means have been exhausted.
3. Read simple selections in newspapers, magazines, and graded readers on travel, geography, history, and social customs, as well as biographical sketches, short stories, and poems rather than long examples of "literature."

WRITING:

1. Write from dictation text material previously examined for details of written form.
2. Display the ability to write controlled sentences using the subject, direct object, indirect object, prepositional phrases, adverbs, and subordinate clauses in correct word order. Punctuate and spell all material correctly.
3. Write summaries, under the guidance of the teacher, of selections that have been read as a group or as an individual student with teacher help.
4. Demonstrate the ability to transpose from English to the foreign language simple sentences and exercises designed to develop specific grammatical skills.

GRAMMAR: Recognize and use correctly all basic grammatical patterns. A practical knowledge of all basic grammar is <u>essential</u> by the end of Level II. (See Appendix)

CULTURE:

1. Appreciate how the values in the foreign culture affect family, society, economy, politics, and education in the foreign country.
2. Demonstrate empathy with the value systems of the foreign society.
3. Show in classroom discussions and extra-curricular activities how these values affect family, society, politics, economy, etc.
4. Demonstrate the ability to react within authentic social conventions to common situations such as greetings, compliments, condolences, etc.

Level II (Con't.)

CULTURE: (Con't.)

5. Express an awareness in written and oral work of the similarities and differences of each culture as these characteristics are made evident in travelogues, films, slides, speeches by foreign visitors, and Americans who have lived abroad.
6. Read independently foreign newspapers and magazines which have a vocabulary commensurate to the student's interest and level of learning.
7. Attend foreign films, plays, lectures, concerts and art exhibits whenever possible to appreciate the artistic accomplishments of the people.
8. Identify foreign influence on U. S. and world culture.

German-Level III

Basic Premises:

1. Continued practice in the basic skills -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- which now include study of subtle grammar concepts, is an essential feature of Level III programs.
2. Opportunities to expand individual interests are numerous in the developmental reading and individual study, which are important components of Level III programs.
3. Discussion of cultural items are all in the target language. Empathy for the way of life of the people being studied, and enthusiasm for diversity as it is encountered are important.

Desired Student Performance at Completion of Level III

LISTENING:

1. Understand all previously studied material when it is recombined.
2. Understand disconnected and sustained discourse.
3. Comprehend recordings of native voices recognizing standard speech and dialects.
4. Demonstrate the skill of auditory discrimination when listening to long and complex sentences.
5. Distinguish nuances of meaning with different stresses and intonations.
6. Demonstrate the ability to comprehend a large, passive vocabulary.

SPEAKING:

1. Use only the foreign language in the classroom.
2. Participate in spontaneous discussion of topics related to class reading, visual experiences, and extra-curricular activities with appropriate questions, answers, or rejoinders.
3. Demonstrate increased skill in using the subjunctive, and complex and compound sentences.
4. Show skill in integrating and recombining syntactical units on assigned topics.
5. Display agility in using correctly numerous idiomatic structures necessary to express the "flavor" of the language.
6. Prove in an oral-taped test the ability to express fluently, all sounds of the language using correct intonation, stress, and liaison when it applies.

Level III (Con't)

READING:

1. Read unedited literary readings, short stories, plays, essays, biographies, or poetry which will serve as a preparation to later formal in-depth study of literature in Level IV.
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze in a general way the fundamental components instrumental in developing literary appreciation.
3. Indicate ability to derive meaning from what is read by skillful use of contextual clues and judicious use of the dictionary.
4. Demonstrate the ability to read and fully comprehend a short unfamiliar selection of material equal in difficulty to the materials previously assigned to the class.
5. Show the ability to read aloud with proper intonation demonstrating awareness of meaning through intonation and stress.
6. Derive genuine enjoyment from reading experiences.

WRITING:

1. Demonstrate ability to write easily basic grammatical forms.
2. Write topical paragraphs, dialogues, and compositions, both directed and original, that are logical and relatively error-free.
3. Employ note-taking as a learning device.
4. Demonstrate a writing vocabulary suitable for composing informal and formal letters, and summaries of material read.
5. Spell and punctuate accurately.

GRAMMAR: New grammar details, representing the exceptions and subtleties of the language, must be learned by the student as these elements are encountered within the context of extensive reading and not as mere isolated manipulative skills. Students should also evaluate, review, and reinforce concepts previously learned in Levels I and II. (No Appendix included for Level III since all basic grammar items are included in Levels I and II.)

CULTURE:

1. Be cognizant of the varieties of ways in which the main themes of the culture are reflected in everyday cultural patterns.
2. Show an awareness of how age, sex, social class, and area of residence affect language use.
3. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate the authenticity of statements made regarding the foreign culture.
4. Assimilate the cultural values and contributions of the countries in which the language is spoken.
5. Develop, through reading selections that provide insights into the social, political, and economic structures of the country, a background sufficient to facilitate subsequent reading on Level IV.

6. Exhibit the ability to speak intelligently and correctly, expressing empathy for the social customs of the people, and knowledge of the history and geography of the land, of selected classical and contemporary literature, and of the present-day role of religious and political groups, ethnic minorities, and education in the social life of the country.
7. Relate the foreign culture, in oral and written work, to our own society and to other disciplines, especially the humanities.
8. Sense and begin to appreciate the great contributions of the people in literature, art, music, philosophy religion, science, and education.
9. Have a legitimate concern for the popular culture of the people as expressed in movies, art, popular and folk music, sports and recreation, journalism, and dance.
10. Be able, in the final analysis, to imaginatively share the foreign culture as an active participant of that community.

APPENDIX
German-Level I

Suggested Basic Grammatical Items:

A. Attain familiarity with the following grammatical items:

1. Definite articles, indefinite articles, der words, ein words
2. Nouns
   a. Gender
   b. Case excepting genitive
   c. Number
3. Adjective endings - introduction to all patterns
4. Pronouns - all cases excepting genitive
   a. Personal
   b. Future
   c. Perfect
   d. Demonstrative
   e. Relative
5. Verbs (Strong)
   a. Present
   b. Future
   c. Perfect
   d. Imperative
   e. Simple Past of Common Verbs
   f. Modal Auxiliaries (exposure to common expressions only i.e. ich mochte, etc.)
6. Prepositions - all excepting those using the genitive
7. Numbers
   a. Cardinal
   b. Ordinal
8. Subordinating and coordinating conjunctions

B. Introduce the following syntax items:

1. Word order in independent and dependent clauses
2. Position of nicht
3. Position of separable prefixes
4. Position of time expressions
5. Position of infinitives
6. Position of direct and indirect objects
7. Change of statement to interrogative
8. Inverted word order

C. Place special emphasis on:

1. Pronunciation of the umlauts, ch, z, l, r, and the final consonants d, b, and g.
2. Intonation and rhythms in statements, questions and commands.

APPENDIX
German-Level II

Suggested Basic Grammatical Items:

A. Perfect the use of the following grammatical items:

1. Definite articles, indefinite articles, der words, ein words.
2. Nouns
   a. Gender
   b. Case including the genitive
   c. Number
3. Adjectives
   a. Learn all patterns
   b. Nominative and Accusative
   c. Comparison
4. Pronouns - all cases including the genitive
   a. Reflexive
   b. Personal
   c. Interrogative
   d. Relative
   e. Demonstrative
5. Verbs (Strong and weak)
   a. Present
   b. Future
   c. Perfect and Past Perfect
   d. Imperative
   e. Simple Past (with müssen, dürfen, können, wollen, sollen)
   f. Modal Auxiliaries
   g. Subjunctive
   h. Irregular participles
6. Prepositions
   a. Including those using the genitive
   b. Two-way prepositions
   c. Compounds: -da, -wo
   d. Personal pronoun vs. prepositional compound
7. Numbers
   a. Cardinal
   b. Ordinal
8. Subordinating conjunctions
9. Adverbs
   a. Placement
   b. Comparison

B. Strive for complete mastery of the following syntax items:

1. Word order in independent and dependent clauses
2. Position of nicht
3. Position of separable prefixes
4. Position of time expressions
5. Position of infinitives
6. Position of direct and indirect objects
7. Change of statement to interrogative
8. Inverted word order
9. Verbs in second position
10. Verbs in last position

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